

ERGONOMIC TIPS FOR HOME WORKERS TO REDUCE AND PREVENT BACK PAIN



INSPIRED ERGONOMICS

WORKING FROM HOME?

HOW TO ENSURE YOU SET YOUR HOME WORKSTATION UP CORRECTLY AND REDUCE YOUR RISK OF BACK PAIN

Back pain is multi-causal and cumulative. With so many hours at work spent sitting at the computer, few realise how the workstation set up can often be a significant contributor to recovery from pain and back issues. Instead, a good ergonomic workstation set up will help to ensure that any tension and pressure on the spine is reduced, or if you are currently struggling with back pain, it will facilitate a quicker recovery, in conjunction with treatment and exercise.

When working from home, it can be harder to ensure a healthy workstation set up, so we have created this guide to help you adapt your home office set up accordingly.

If you only have a dining table and chair to work from, there are several adaptations you can make to mimic an office set up:

THE CHAIR

If you only have a dining chair to use, try and adapt this in a way that ensures your lower back curve is supported and you are sitting at a height that allows your arms to be level with the table you are using. Use a cushion, rolled up towel, or even better, an inflatable lumbar support cushion to support your lower back curve. Aim to gently fill the curve without pushing you forward. Note that you may need to use a cushion on the seat as well if your sitting elbow height is lower than the table, as this will reduce shoulder and wrist tension build up caused by having to extend your arms upwards.

THE SCREEN

If you are using a laptop it is essential to ensure that this is raised up to eye level height if you are using it for any significant period of time. Always try and avoid just using it on your kitchen table as you will automatically adopt a slouch to read the screen. You can either dock it on to a computer screen or raise it up on books or even better, a laptop riser, and then use a SEPARATE keyboard and mouse. This will ensure your shoulders, neck, wrists and back can remain relaxed and tension free.

KEEP MOVING

Where ever you are working in your home, take advantage of the space and keep moving to avoid tension build up, at least every hour. You can alternate from sitting with standing at a higher work surface, such as a kitchen worktop or a chest of drawers. You could even work outside if you have a patio or garden, getting in some fresh air to blow those brain cobwebs away! If you are tempted to use your sofa, build up a nest of pillows behind your back to stop a c curve slouch in your back.

Otherwise, if you have a desk you can use and an adjustable office style chair, please follow the guidelines below

SET UP YOUR WORKSTATION CORRECTLY

Back pain is a common problem, particularly if you spend long periods of time at your desk working with computers. When we sit, we generally slouch, putting strain on our backs.

Bad posture can be a significant contributor to back pain. This can lead to a loss of productivity and even days off work, costing you valuable time and money.

Back pain caused by bad posture is cumulative and so it is vital to prevent problems **BEFORE** they occur. To help you take the first steps towards preventing and reducing posture related back pain, we have included a guide to show you how to set up your workstation correctly and some ergonomic tips.

KEYBOARD & MOUSE CLOSE TO FRONT OF DESK

BENEFIT: Reduces pressure on the back, arms and hands.

SET UP: Keep the keyboard and mouse close to the front of the desk to reduce reaching forward. Ensure hands and wrists in a neutral 90° position - avoid putting paperwork in front of your keyboard.

ENSURE TOP OF SCREEN IS AT EYE LEVEL

BENEFIT: Reduces pressure on the neck & encourages spine extension.

SET UP: Place top of computer/laptop screen at eye level and arm distance away so head is in a neutral position, with chin slightly tucked in. Use a separate keyboard and mouse if on a laptop screen OR dock it on to a computer screen. Keep centrally placed, not at an angle.

THIGHS ARE SUPPORTED WITH GAP BEHIND KNEE

BENEFIT: Reducing pressure on the thighs and under the knee.

SET UP: Adjust seat length to fit the length of your thighs, keeping a two to three finger gap underneath your knees.

SEAT HEIGHT ADJUSTED TO KEEP FEET FLAT ON FLOOR/FOOTREST

BENEFIT: Reducing pressure on the legs.

SET UP: Knees to be slightly below your hips and feet flat on the floor. You may need to use a footrest or desk raiser to keep arms level with the desk as well.

It is essential to support your body correctly when sitting. If you would like further bespoke advice on how to set up your workstation and chair to maximise prevention and reduction of musculoskeletal issues, just contact us. Inspired Ergonomics specialise in providing ergonomic advice that is tailored around your own specific requirements.

Contact us at info@inspiredergonomics.com or call 0203 146 6850

HEAD BALANCED, NOT POKING FORWARD

BENEFIT: Reduces pressure on the neck and shoulders.

SET UP: Ensure the head is in a natural position, with the chin gently tucked in, but not pushed forward. A headrest can be helpful if it can be adjusted to remind you where to place your head.

SIT BACK IN THE CHAIR

BENEFIT: Supporting the body during different postural requirements according to the task at hand.

SET UP: Adjust according to the task - upright for computer work, relaxed back for phone or reading work or keep on a free float to automatically adjust to you

ARMS SUPPORTED BY YOUR SIDE & PARALLEL TO THE DESK

BENEFIT: Prevents frozen shoulder, RSI and tension in the shoulders, neck and upper back.

SET UP: It is essential to keep your arms at parallel with the desk, with hands and wrists relaxed when typing, so position the armrests to support you. Ensure your shoulders are relaxed. Adjust the depth if the armrests if possible, to allow you to bring the chair in close to the desk.

LOWER BACK IS SUPPORTED

BENEFIT: Supports the lower curve of the back, keeping it in a healthy S shape and reducing pressure on the back.

SET UP: Check that it is the correct height and, if possible, depth for your lower back curve.



KEEPING YOUR BACK HEALTHY

To prevent back pain, it is not only important to adjust your workstation and chair to enable you to sit correctly, but to also consider the points highlighted below:

DRINK PLENTY OF WATER.

Have a water bottle nearby so you can monitor how much you drink during the day. On average, around 1.2 litres of fluid every day. This works out to be about six 200ml or eight 150 ml glasses.

TAKE REGULAR BREAKS.

Even a few minutes every hour is beneficial, just stand up and walk around a little, stand when taking the next telephone call or do some workstation stretching exercises. This will help the blood to circulate around the body and bring more oxygen to the muscles and your brain. Even the act of standing is beneficial in itself. Aim to stand every 20-40 minutes, and at the very least every hour.

TAKE REGULAR EXERCISE.

Try and incorporate a little aerobic exercise into your regular routine. Walking alone is hugely beneficial or find a local gym class that you will enjoy. When working from home, ensure you get out at some point during the day.

TRY PILATES OR YOGA.

Both of these are great core strengthening and tension easing exercises.

They are hugely popular and so you should be able to find one close to your work or home or even try a you tube video or an exercise app.

TRY AND REDUCE YOUR STRESS LEVELS.

We are more susceptible to back pain when we are stressed, as our muscles tense up. Try Yoga, breathing exercises or a walk away from your desk. It is often during 'breaks' that solution and clarity arise. Check your nutrition too.

WATCH YOUR POSTURE.

Just being aware of your posture, remembering to stand or sit straight and tall, will reduce stress on your spine. Always adopt a balanced posture and try not to lean over on one side. Remember that it is important to maintain an overall relaxed position when sitting, to avoid restricting movements by clenching muscles and adopting an unnatural, stiff posture.

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR OR BACK CARE SPECIALIST

If you are experiencing any new or on-going pain symptoms, it is important to resolve issues quickly. They will be able to advise you on the best course of action or exercise/stretching program for you or refer you on to a specialist.

CONTACT US

For further resources and information. We are here to help at

info@inspiredergonomics.com or call 020 3146 6850